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ART AND PROGRESS

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A MODEL CITY

In this day of advanced educational methods the value of models as means of enforcing verbal instruction is well understood. A model represents actuality and for this reason is impressive. Of course there are persons with blind eyes as well as deaf ears, but in most instances impressions are conveyed more directly by sight than hearing. For this reason one good work of art set in the midst of the people will do more toward establishing a standard than many volumes of essays. And if this is true in each instance how great indeed must be the educational value of an assemblage of such works properly related. This is the meaning of a model city. In an address made at the recent Convention of the

American Federation of Arts, Secretary MacVeagh pointed out the possibilities of making Washington such a city. "It can be done so easily," he said. "There is unlimited means to begin with; there is the absence of many of those political difficulties which, in the ordinary city, block such movements; the way is clear, and there rests upon the National Government, it seems to me, the responsibility of making this a model city—the opportunity for the making of a model city being more at hand here than elsewhere and more easy of accomplishment; and being a central city, that is, the capital of the Nation, it would have the influence of an example, the influence of a 'city placed on a hill.'"

It is because of the influence it would exert that the making of this model city is particularly worth while. There is no reason why every city should not be a model of beauty, of cleanliness, and order, but there is probably no city which would serve as effectively as a model as Washington. It is visited continually by persons from all parts of the country; it is the tourists' Mecca. It is, furthermore, the winter residence of representatives from every State and Territory in the Union. A large proportion of its population claim residence in some other city or town. And the people who go to Washington are not unseeing, the influence of good example is not wasted. The spirit of progress pervades America, our people as a rule are not content with less than the best—that is, the best so far as their knowledge goes. For example, the Library of Congress has been the incentive of numerous noble buildings (nobler perhaps than their prototype) since erected by State governments, not merely architecturally, but decoratively, representing, as it were, a work of art in which the element of beauty was dominant. The Park Commission Plan for the artistic development of Washington has without doubt inspired numberless cities to take thought for the future and employ expert advice along similar lines. And so it will be in smaller things. The crowds of people who pass through Washington carry

away, in greater measure than one may believe, vivid impressions of its art, the state of its streets, the character of its buildings, the layout of its parks. Should such an opportunity for disseminating knowledge and upbuilding high standards of civic art be disregarded? More than is commonly supposed is the general public sensitive and appreciative of beauty. When the great World's Fair at Chicago was planned there was some doubt as to whether or not the people would injure the grass plots, shrubbery, etc., or whether they would be so impressed by the orderliness and beauty that they would help preserve it. The experiment was tried and the people became self-constituted sponsors for that which appealed to their admiration. There were less than a score of malicious acts committed. The benefit accrued, moreover, to the individuals who thus became better citizens. In like manner Washington can do a great work in citizenship by setting a proper standard. It will some day. The recent appointment of the Art Commission is a sign of progress. Men are beginning to realize that here is the finest opportunity ever offered in the history of the world to make a model city. All that is necessary is for this realization to become national.

BACKYARDS ALONG THE "RIGHT OF WAY"

There are no more depressing sights than those to be seen from the car window when passing on a train through the majority of the cities and towns of America. What one sees, as a rule, is an interminable panorama of forlorn, unkept backyards, the poverty of which, in beauty, is occasionally accentuated by a scrap of straggling bloom indicative of an errant desire for loveliness. Why, one may well ask, should this be? Is the railroad of necessity a blight? By no means; witness England, where all along the "right of way" the land is well kept and not infrequently cultivated. One of the first impressions the American traveler receives upon approaching London is of the charm of the little

backyards, so tidy and so full of blossom, that line the railroad track for miles before the great city itself is reached. The conditions in this country are horrible in comparison and are, perhaps, the more extraordinary when it is recalled that the major portion of our poorer class is of foreign parentage, if not foreign birth. In Europe the cottage garden is almost universal. Do our immigrants leave their sense of beauty in their own lands? Probably not, but the force of environment is strong. To alter conditions requires unusual virility. One is apt to fall easily into the gait set by one's neighbors and with familiarity is bred "blind sight." We are rarely conscious of our own shabbiness and there is in truth "a dear dilapidation that we love." What is needed is stimulus to effort. Why should not this take the form of a competition instituted by the railroads, inasmuch as their property would be profited? The prizes for the best backyards need not be large nor the labor entailed great. By railroad men and garden experts the scheme has been declared feasible. Notices might be posted in the railroad stations, the inspection made but once, and prizes awarded by local authorities in public halls. Probably at first there would be few contestants, but the contagion spreads like wild fire, and it would not be many seasons before great improvement in the general aspect would be noted.

WANTED: MUSEUM DIRECTORS

The fact that two museums in this country—the Metropolitan Museum, New York, and the John Herron Art Institute, Indianapolis—are at the time of writing seeking directors, lends pertinency to comment upon the scarcity of trained men in this country to fill such positions. It is true that the qualifications are exacting. A man to be a successful director of an art museum must have executive ability; he must know how and where to place responsibility; he must have a broad knowledge of art, and, since the museums have ceased to